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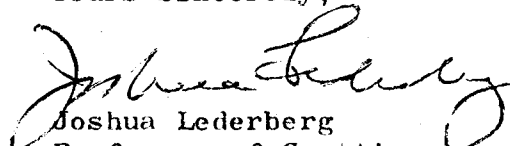
Dear Dr. Foster

Thank you for your letter of September 4, responding to my remarks on the release of information on the feasibility of binary chemical weapons. I must accept your arguments with respect to the criteria for declassification. I was groping for some other level of discretion, call it "taste" if you wish, about drawing attention to information.

What I get from this discussion is that there is no practical way in which scientific developments that might be quite dangerous in other areas, like civil insurgency, can be kept secret except (for a while) insofar as they relate to national security vis-a-vis international conflict. I have no procedural formula to offer myself (except the exercise of discreet restraint) that would be consistent with more pervasive needs for freedom of information.

But there is also the corollary, that the cost of eventual public knowledge should be anticipated in the system analysis of the development of new forms of weapons.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

P.S. I cannot tax you with the burden of continuing this correspondence. However, I would be grateful if you would put it at the disposal of the panel of scientists on secrecy mentioned in your letter.